

Chemical PACs Give \$2.5 Million

Edward Roeder Special To The Constitution

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By Edward Roeder

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WASHINGTON — Chemical industry interests have already contributed some \$2.5 million to influence 1980 federal elections, analysis of campaign finance reports shows.

Nearly a fifth of the money came from political action committees (PACs) of corporations charged by the Justice Department with responsibility for serious unlawful pollution.

Some \$455,837 was given by PACs of firms recently convicted or indicted for federal crimes relating to pollution, or named as defendants within the past year in federal suits charging that they have contributed to release of carcinogens or other hazardous poisons into water sources and, in one case, the air.

The chemical industry PACs contributed some \$220,000 to presidential primary campaigns. The rest of the money went to influence congressional elections, nearly twice as much going to Republican candidates as to Democrats. The largest amounts went to very conservative Republican challengers running against liberal Democratic senators.

Among presidential contenders, Republican Ronald Reagan got the largest amount of chemical industry money, some \$43,833. President Carter ranked second, with \$36,550.

PACs, or political action committees, are legal funds formed by corporations, labor unions, and other interest groups to raise and spend money to influence elections. Chemical manufacturing firms and their parent corporations and trade associations have formed some 141 PACs, which include roughly a tenth of all the corporate PACs in America. Statistics in this report are based upon analysis of a Federal Election Commission computer compilation of contributions reported through Sept. 20 by those 141 chemical industry PACs.

(The FEC announced Thursday that special interest PACs of all types had pumped more than \$32 million into 1980 federal election campaigns by the end of August, including an average of more than a quarter-million dollars for each Senate race.)

The chemical PACs have contributed more than \$1,000 to every one of the 25 incumbent senators seeking re-election this year. And they've given substantial amounts to 522 House candidates, including 339 of the 393 incumbents seeking re-election.

Four Republican congressmen running for the Senate — Steve Symms of Idaho, James Abdnor of South Dakota, Charles Grassley of Iowa and Dan Quayle of Indiana — have received sizable chemical PAC contributions. All four challengers were given low marks for their vot-

ing records by the League of Conservation Voters, an environmentalist lobby.

Their opponents — respectively, Sens. Frank Church, George McGovern, John Culver and Birch Bayh — got moderate to high LCV ratings.

"By just zeroing in on environmental issues, that (LCV rating) doesn't cover all the issues that we'd use in determining who we would support with PAC contributions," said Rich Long, manager of public affairs for the Washington office of DOW Chemical Corp. "There are tax questions, foreign trade considerations, budget-balancing, too, among others. The League of Conservation Voters, if their only criterion is whether a legislator is pro-environment or not, that's single-issue politics with a pretty narrow perspective."

Dow Chemical has contributed some \$191,350 thus far to influence 1980 federal elections, more than any three other chemical industry PACs. But the amounts have not been widely noted, because Dow Chemical has eight different corporate PACs, more than any other corporation in America. Contributions to the same candidates — usually conservative Republicans — are frequently made by more than one of the Dow PACs.

Like most corporate PACs, Dow's raises money from officials of the firm.